(d) the steps taken by Government for their upliftment?

THE MINISTER OF TRIBAL AFFAIRS (SHRI P.R. KYNDIAH): (a) to (d) The Ministry of Tribal Affairs launched a new initiative in the year 2005-06 for the development of forest villages under Special Central Assistance to Tribal Sub Plan (SCA to TSP), under which infrastructure work relating to basic services and facilities, *viz.* approach roads, healthcare, primary education, minor irrigation, rainwater harvesting, drinking water, sanitation, community halls, etc. and activities related to livelihood are taken up for implementation. Under the programme, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs has so far sanctioned and released Rs. 45,924.71 lakh for 2,388 forest villages/habitations spread in 11 States. In addition, the scheme of Grant-in-Aid to State Tribal Development Cooperative Corporations (STDCCs) for Minor Forest Produce (MFP) operations aims at ensuring remunerative prices to tribals engaged in the collection of MFP. Further, the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, enacted by the Parliament, has been notified for operation with effect from 31.12.2007. The Act seeks to recognize and vest certain forest rights in forest dwelling Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers who have been residing in such forests for generations but whose rights could not be recorded to ensure (a) tenurial security, providing them relief against the physical and psychological alienation from land belonging to them; (b) livelihood, in terms of agriculture and ownership of minor forest produce, including right to collect, use, and dispose the same; and (c) traditional and customary rights.

National Tribal Policy

1838. SHRI KANJIBHAI PATEL: Will the Minister of TRIBAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the National Tribal Policy is under consideration of Government;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is a fact that a Committee of Ministers has been constituted to consider this policy;

(d) if so, when it was constituted;

(e) whether any interim report has been presented to Government by the Committee; and

(f) by when the final report is likely to be submitted to Government?

THE MINISTER OF TRIBAL AFFAIRS (SHRI P.R. KYNDIAH): (a) to (f) Ministry of Tribal Affairs has formulated a draft National Tribal Policy in June 2006, in order to address the issues concerning tribals *viz.* lower Human Development Index, poor infrastructure, diminishing control over the natural resource base, persistent threats of eviction from their natural habitat, exclusion from mainstream society, inequality in distribution of wealth and opportunities, non-empowerment, and inadequate implementation of Constitutional provisions, and to ensure their active and informed participation in development. After extensive consultation with various stakeholders, the final draft of Policy was placed before the Union Cabinet for approval on 31st May, 2007. The Union Cabinet has referred it to a Group of Ministers for harmonization with the National Rehabilitation Policy. The Policy has not been finalized.